

THE QUEENS OF SOCIETY.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

A more bewitching Irish girl than was Mrs. Cornwallis West ten years ago it is impossible to conceive. Exquisitely pretty, she was, and for the matter of that still is, the very incarnation of mischief, a fact which need surprise no one when it is borne in mind that she is the daughter of a parson, and of an Irish one to boot. It used to be absolutely impossible to remain serious or to preserve a grave demeanor in her mirth-provoking presence, and I shall never forget the commotion which she created at Madrid during the winter which she spent at the British Legation there with her husband's cousin, Lionel Sackville-West, now Lord Sackville. Even the most impassive and mournful-looking faces of the dignified Castilian hidalgos were forced to relax into a smile and sometimes even into a broad grin when brought into contact with the merry and curly-headed daughter of Lady Olivia Fitzpatrick. The Countesses of Dudley and Spencer, and the recently widowed Duchess of Manchester, though belonging to an earlier generation, still preserve traces of the beauty for which at the time of the Franco-German War they were famed throughout the courts and capitals of Europe. Although Lady Dudley has been frequently described as being nothing but a magnificent statue without the soul or intellect to match the out-

With regard to Portugal and Switzerland, the sex-I cannot conscientiously qualify it with the word fair-I sufficiently unattractive to remind one of the fact that whereas the Holy Bible in describing the creation of the world takes the trouble to add the words "And God saw that it was good," at the close of each verse relating the manner in which He made everything animate and inanimate, it pointedly abstains from giving this expression of satisfaction on the part of the Almighty after He had completed the creation of woman. I shall never forget the night of my first arrival at Lisbon. A gala opera was taking place when I entered the Sao Carlos Theatre and the house was thronged with the "fine fleur" of Lisbon society. Having just come from Madrid, where beauty is so universal as to be positively at a discount, my gaze roamed from

everybody who forms part of that which the English comedian Thorne designates as the "lupper crust." To omit putting in an appearance during the season even if only for a few minutes at the Friday evenings of the "Clubs," as they are familiarly termed, would be regarded in the light of a breach of the social code. In the receptions of Madame de Clauvillais, as at those of her sister, Princess Dietrichstein-Niebohus, whose husband was a kinsman of Queen Victoria's Prince Consort, fair faces abound, and as the Metternichs, the Schwarzenbergs, the Auerspergs, the Esterhazys, the Rosenbergs and the Fürstenbergs are all related to one another, everybody calls every one else by his or her Christian name. Possessed of all the animation and grace, though not of the elegance of the Parisienne, the blue-blooded beauties of the great world at Vienna are entirely free from any suspicion of pose or artificiality. Much of their captivating charm is due to their natural and unaffected manner and character. Their minds are as untrammelled as their willows yet voluptuous figures from any suspicion of artificial restraint, and they make no pretence of concealing the fact that their one object in life is gaiety. In their pursuit of pleasure they are unimpeded by any apprehensions of the qu'en dira-t-on of the world, for they are convinced that nothing short of crime can deprive them of the social privileges of their caste. Probably the most striking instance of this complete disregard for the opinion of the world is the Princess Pauline Metternich, now the most charming and tricky of grandmothers, who, notwithstanding her mature age, is still as ready as in days gone by to sing a rude cantabile ballad or to play some mischievous scholboy prank. Although she has been guilty of the most extraordinary extravagances of conduct, and has done the most unheard of things, yet she has never allowed her eccentricities to degenerate into anything approaching vulgarity, and has known how to exorcism herself with such an amount of native dignity that there has never been any suspicion of abasement or moral degradation.

Although there are some strangely beautiful women in the society of the northern capital of Russia, such as, for instance, Princess Nelly Barintzinskii, Madame Tolstoi, the young Countess Shouvaloff, and a number of others, yet it is by the originality and brilliancy of her intellect, by the subtle magnetism and by the piquant mixture of Asiatic grace and European elegance that the grande dame of St. Petersburg is able to ex-

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IV.

"He shows his hand first and bets afterward."